



JUSTINE DAVIS MEMBER FOR JOHNSTON

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Media Release: Third Party Merits Reviews are needed now more than ever

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Justine Davis MLA:

"This week marks the fifth sitting of the new Northern Territory Parliament, the Government's actions continue to threaten the integrity of our democracy and the future of our environment.

Last week, I proposed 74 amendments to the dangerous and ill-conceived Territory Coordinator Bill, all designed to make the legislation safer, more reasonable, and aligned with Territorians' rights and expectations of their Government. As an under-resourced independent, this was a huge undertaking, but I did it to represent the critical and well-founded concerns raised by the community through the scrutiny committee process and beyond.

Every single amendment I proposed was voted down.

Now, in the upcoming sitting, the Government will push Parliament to remove critical third-party review mechanisms from the Planning, Petroleum, and Water Acts of the Northern Territory.

Third-party merits reviews are far from trivial. They are not weapons of so-called "green lawfare." They cannot be replaced by judicial review alone. While judicial review assesses whether a Government decision is legal, merits review examines whether the decision, considering all available information, was the right decision—one of good merit.

These reviews are essential to good governance and can be undertaken by a range of civil society organisations, including land councils and environmental groups.

The Government's move to eliminate these crucial checks and balances just one week after passing the Territory Coordinator Bill sends a clear message: this Government is determined to consolidate power, erode democratic processes, silence public input on decision-making and legislation, and prioritize the profits of large extractive industries over the rights and wellbeing of Territorians. Territorians need access to Third Party Merits Reviews now more than ever.

Territorians deserve better, and I will continue to fight for transparency, accountability, and the protection of our community's voice.

Justine Davis

Independent Member for Johnston

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